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Johnson Meets with President Bush on Social Security

Congresswoman: Retirement Security Depends on Affordable Health Care

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Nancy Johnson and other leading congressional lawmakers met with President Bush today at the White House to discuss strengthening Social Security and improving retirement security for all Americans.

Johnson said the high cost of treating chronic illnesses and providing long-term care to seniors, in addition to the coming retirement of 70 million Baby Boomers, makes improving our retirement security system a top priority. Johnson also said Congress has a responsibility to address Social Security now before its financial and demographic problems become acute.

“Social Security is the foundation of Americans’ retirement security, and we must protect it for the retirees of today and tomorrow,” said Johnson, a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee, which will oversee any retirement security legislation.

“Social Security is sound for today’s seniors and for those nearing retirement, but it needs to be strengthened for younger workers, our children and grandchildren. As President Clinton said in 1998, ‘today Social Security is sound, but a demographic crisis looms if we fail to act’ for the future. Clearly, we need to act now,” Johnson added.

In 1950, there were 16 workers to support every retiree on Social Security. Today, there are only 3 workers supporting every retiree on Social Security, and that ratio is shrinking. This demographic shift will result in a \$3.7 trillion shortfall over the next 75 years.

Johnson urged that the coming debate be as broad as possible, including not only Social Security improvements but also measures to make the cost of treating chronic illnesses and long-term care more affordable.

“No matter their retirement income, America’s seniors will not have the peace of mind of a secure retirement if they cannot afford the health care they need,” she said.

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